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REMARKS

ON

MR. BIRCH'S

** SERIOUS REASONS FOR UNIFORMLY OBJECTING
TO THE PRACTICE OF VACCINATION. **

BY JAMES MOORE,

MEMBER OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS, IN LONDON.

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REMARKS,

&c.

AS the facts in favour of the extraordinary discovery of Dr. Jenner multiply daily, many persons expected that the Anti-vaccinists would soon be silent. I confess I never was of that opinion; for I recollect but few instances where a confuted controversial writer yielded. But I own I thought that my answer to those whom I animadverted upon would not have excited envy in others; yet I find that Mr. Birch appears discontented with my neglect of a letter published by him.* He compels me to correct that omission; and I shall make an apology, which I hope will satisfy him.

* *Serious Reasons*, &c. by John Birch, page 30.

He must be aware, that had I replied particularly to all the Anti-vaccinists, though the vanity of some obscure writers might have been gratified by any notice taken of their works, yet I should have exhausted the patience of my readers; I was therefore compelled to a selection, and I fixed upon those who had made the strongest impression on the public. The assigning this reason ought not to offend Mr. Birch; for the effect which they produced, was not owing to their merits, but to the shocking epithets they employed, the horrid cases they described, and the monstrous caricatures with which their works were disgraced. The disgusting prints and hand-bills of the late infatuated Dr. Rowley did more harm to Vaccination, than the five queries of Mr. Birch, or his best arguments.

The friends of Vaccination never dreaded the argumentative writers of whom Mr. Birch may be considered as the head; though he is uneasy at being included among the Anti-vaccinists, and is evidently much ashamed of their company. How they will relish that contempt from one embarked in the same cause I know not; but his feelings are natural.

He accuses me particularly of unfairness in placing him in this class.* To this I must remark, that persons of a peculiar sensibility are apt to conceive themselves the objects of attention when that is not the case. I assure Mr. Birch that he is quite mistaken in thinking that I any where alluded to him; for at that time I had not even seen his letter, and was only induced to read it lately, by being told he had particularly attacked me,

Mr. Birch must not, however, be hurt that a short letter, even from him, should make less noise in the world than the extravagant absurdities of Dr. Rowley, which were posted through the town by bill-stickers.

Mr. Birch does not appear to entertain the same notion of this strange publication as the author's friends; for he says, "I shall not take notice of that part of Mr. Moore's pamphlet which attacks the physicians; not only because I conceive it beside my immediate subject, but because I consider the Commentaries on the Cow-pox, lately

* Serious Reasons, &c. p. 30.

“ published by Dr. Moseley, to contain a full
 “ answer to all that Mr. Moore has said on
 “ this head.”*

This, if just, is a humiliating paragraph for me, and a deplorable one for the public. If Dr. Moseley's Commentaries contain a full answer, that is to say, a refutation of my observations on his and Dr. Rowley's works; it must follow, that the transformation of a boy into the figure of an ox is still true; and that all the new diseases which have only been lately discovered, though their cause has been operating for centuries, really exist. Besides, as Vaccination has now been extended to almost every part of the globe, these transformations must have augmented; and the new diseases must have spread their ravages far and wide. Yet, strange to relate, it miraculously happens, that no celebrated practitioner, however extensive his business, has ever seen one of these melancholy cases.

Alarmed by the above passage, with its consequences, I examined with painful attention Dr. Moseley's Commentaries; yet, though I

* Serious Reasons, &c. page 43.

have searched every page with scrupulous care, I have not only been unable to find a full answer to what I wrote, but I could not discover an answer of any sort. Whether Dr. Moseley considered my work as not deserving an answer, or as not easily answered, he alone can declare. But certainly he never has mentioned my name, replied to my arguments, nor, as far as I can detect, alluded to my work.

What am I to think then of the paragraph which I have quoted? Mr. Birch, in repeated passages, has kindly praised my candour, and I shall not now forfeit that praise; for I am resolved to put the mildest construction on all his errors. I really believe that he supposed Dr. Moseley meant to answer me, and too rashly ventured to assert that he had given me a full answer; while, perhaps, in point of fact, he had found it impossible to read through his Commentaries.

The only author who, previous to Mr. Birch, condescended to make me any reply is Dr. Squirrel.* He is so violently angry, that he published a determination to prosecute me at Westminster Hall. I entertained some hopes

* *Observations on the Serious, &c.* by R. Squirrel, page 57.

that he would put these threats in execution ; as it would have given me an opportunity of placing the cause of Vaccination in the hands of an eloquent lawyer. I know those who, by a slight exertion, could have overwhelmed the Anti-vaccinists with both argument and ridicule. But Dr. Squirrel has unfortunately been satisfied with expressing his resolution ; and I must console myself for his not executing his vengeance.

I have before stated my belief that Mr. Birch never read Dr. Moseley's last work, which he praises ; I must likewise own that I much suspect he has hardly read mine, which he condemns. For at the commencement of his criticism he writes, " Mr. Moore, in the beginning of his book, for what reason I cannot discern, pays a studied compliment to the humanity of the faculty of medicine, at the expense of surgeons." *

Why did not Mr. Birch take the trouble to quote the passage that he found fault with ? Did he omit this because there is no such passage ? Surgeons undoubtedly do not usually

* Serious Reasons, &c. page 30.

reflect upon their own profession, and not a syllable to that purpose is in my pamphlet. I have indeed paid a most deserved compliment to those medical men, whether physicians or surgeons, who have most disinterestedly attempted the extermination of the Small-pox; and it will give me the highest satisfaction to have an opportunity to extend this compliment to Mr. Birch.

Had my opponent been a skilful advocate, he would certainly have avoided touching upon the horrors of the confluent Small-pox. But Mr. Birch falls immediately upon that unlucky part. He allows that my description "may be just;"* but states that such occurrences "stand as extreme cases, on which the rhetorician may declaim indeed, but from which the sound reasoner can draw no conclusive argument."

I wish Mr. Birch had informed us from what treatise of logic he learnt, that sound reasoners can draw no conclusive arguments from extreme cases. My plain sense, as well as the few books I have read, have taught me that the best con-

* Serious Reasons, &c. page 32.

clusions are to be drawn from facts. The occasional occurrence of the confluent Small-pox is a fact that unfortunately cannot be denied : several thousand instances of these extreme cases occur annually within the bills of mortality. For very few persons die of the distinct Small-pox, and some recover from the confluent ; the numbers of cases of confluent Small-pox therefore exceed the deaths, and these have been ascertained to be upwards of two thousand annually in this metropolis. And it must be recollected that of those who survive, a portion lose one eye, and others are deprived of both.

But Mr. Birch says, he “ cannot see what Mr. Moore gains to his cause, by the “ description.” Let him read the conclusion I draw, and if he cannot see it, then I must own I cannot help it,

Mr. Birch next wanders into the dark labyrinths of pathology, but without Ariadne’s clue. He has ventured to guess at the origin of the vaccine, and has suggested two of the most unlucky hypotheses that have yet been made. These theories are, however, mentioned with no positiveness ; for he introduces the one with

“ I could almost be tempted to think ;” * and the other with “ till wiser heads than mine have determined this point, I will suggest the following conjecture.” I think I could defy the whole congregated faculties of the medical world to guess what Mr. Birch’s hypotheses are.

The truth is, that he has taken it into his fancy that the Vaccine may sometimes be the Itch, and sometimes the Small-pox. Thus two causes of the most opposite kind are assigned for the same effect. The one a cutaneous affection, known to proceed from animalcules : the other a contagious poison, which operates upon the whole constitution. Mr. Birch entitles his work “ Serious Reasons ;” otherwise it certainly would be imagined he was narrating whimsical dreams.

My readers may take it amiss that I should waste their time in refuting such chimeras ; but I hope, without being tedious, I can dispose of the first cause.

Scotch cows never have the Vaccine ; yet Scotch milkers sometimes have the Itch : Ergo, the Itch does not cause the Vaccine.

* Serious Reasons, &c. page 36. 41.

Shall I, by a similar syllogism, dash out likewise his second cause? Nothing could be easier; but, from a better motive than complaisance, I shall admit it.

Birch, “thou reasonest well!” and I shall quote that remarkable passage:—“Now if that disorder (the Vaccine) should happen to be the Small-pox, then the pustule so occasioned, and the matter coming from it, may inoculate Small-pox; and the patient thus inoculated may be for ever secure from that disease, for in fact he will have received Small-pox inoculation.”* Let us acquiesce in this serious reasoning, and I hope Dr. Jenner and all Vaccinists will do the same. The origin of the Vaccine then is only the Small-pox communicated by a milker to the teats of a cow, and carried back from the cow to the human subject: so that patients vaccinated are, as Mr. Birch declares, in fact inoculated with Small-pox, and with Small-pox only.

Whence then is Mr. Birch’s antipathy to Vaccination? He may now in the most satisfactory manner answer his own queries, and all his other objections to Vaccination. We thus shall com-

* Serious Reasons, &c. page 41.

pound the dispute in the most amicable way. We shall allow that he has discovered the true origin of the Vaccine; and of course he must allow that what he avers to be Small-Pox will be a permanent security against the future attacks of that disease. This lucky compromise gains Mr. Birch to our side. But I hope he will maintain his theory in all its consequences. He must write more serious reasons, to defend it against the Anti-vaccinists. He will indignantly refute those who have alledged, that the Vaccine can do more mischief to the human frame than the Small-Pox, since they are both the same. So by this magical hypothesis, the pretended brood of new diseases will now be put to flight, and the ox-faced boy will acquire his natural figure.

After so agreeable a coalition, it gives me pain to be obliged to enter into any thing like hostility with Mr. Birch; but I am under the necessity of correcting some unaccountable mistakes he has made respecting my opinions of primary and secondary Small-Pox.

He says, that it is my opinion, "that the Small-Pox cannot be twice received."* In-

* Serious Reasons, &c. p. 43.

stead of this being my opinion, let him only read the first paragraph of the 57th page of my work:

“ In one sense, therefore, some persons appear
 “ susceptible of the Small-Pox, as often *as the*
 “ *contagion is powerfully applied.* But this
 “ secondary species is usually inconsiderable,
 “ the pustules are few, small, and soon disappear.” I have given several authorities for the above opinion; and I might have added Huxham to the list, who has seen many cases which illustrate it.

I must now take notice of another mis-statement, and I shall quote the words also:—“ But
 “ Mr. Moore admits, that patients have had
 “ *the real Small-Pox* after Vaccination. * I
 am so far from admitting this, that three or four pages of my pamphlet were expressly written to prove the contrary. I have asserted, indeed, that, after Vaccination, “ there are a
 “ very few cases where a slight variolous affec-
 “ tion appears to have been excited by a strong
 “ application of contagion,”† precisely as occurs after the real Small-Pox. I consider these variolous affections, whether following the Small-

* Serious Reasons, &c. p. 45.

† Page 53.

Pox or the Vaccine, as not the *real virulent Small-Pox*; but a disorder of a secondary or far milder kind.

These mis-statements are exceedingly striking; but I never can accuse, or even suspect, a gentleman of doing this intentionally.

The next mis-statement, or false quotation, requires some effort to reply to with calmness. Here are the words:—"Mr. Moore tells us, that "*all the misfortunes* have happened about Chelsea, and in London; and that there has hardly been a suspicion of any failures in opulent families.

"There is something very insidious and unjust in these assertions: they afford almost the only instance of disingenuous reasoning in Mr. Moore's book. By stating the *failures* to have occurred round Chelsea, I presume he aims at one of the opposers of Vaccination, &c."

What does a gentleman mean, who mis-quotes a clear passage, and then accuses the

* *Serious Reasons*, &c. p. 49.

writer of being *very insidious and unjust*.* Turn to page 45 of my work, you will find the real passage run thus:—"It is very lucky, that though Vaccination is practised all over the civilized world, *the new diseases are chiefly* confined to the neighbourhood of Mary-le-bone and Chelsea."

It thus appears, that Mr. Birch has changed the words *new diseases*, to *misfortunes and failures*, which totally alters the sense. For misfortunes and failures would include all the cases in which it is pretended that Small-Pox has occurred after Vaccination, and would have expressed a falshood; whereas, by confining my declaration to the new diseases, it is accurately true. And I am not a little surprised that he should assert I said *all* the misfortunes; when I evidently admitted that there were exceptions, by employing the word *chiefly*. But to convince Mr. Birch still farther of my candour, which he extols on other occasions, he has only to examine the works of the physicians alluded to. I had them always before my eyes, and therefore could never mistake or mis-state them. Look into Dr. Rowley's* list of new diseases, and it will be found that they

* Cow-pox no Security, &c. by Dr. Rowley.

chiefly occurred in the neighbourhood of Mary-le-Bone, as I mention. Then turn to Dr. Moseley's* work, and the following passage may be read :
 “ I have lately had many under my care for
 “ diseased eyes, inveterate eruptions, corroding
 “ ulcerations, and various sorts of itch in
 “ London and the neighbourhood of Chelsea.”
 Whoever reflects must see, that it is difficult to give a more candid account in a few words than I have done.

What cause can be assigned for these remarkable deviations from accuracy ? It is impossible for me to penetrate into the recesses of Mr. Birch's mind, and to detect his lurking motives. In spite, therefore, of appearances, I shall not insinuate that these were wilful mis-statements ; nor shall I accuse my opponent, as he has done me, of acting insidiously and unjustly. On the contrary, I shall make the best apology in my power, and admit that these numerous mistakes, false quotations, and the inconclusive arguments founded upon them, were all owing to his having glanced over the subject in the most careless manner ; and consequently to his having composed his “ Serious Reasons ” with very little reflection.

* Lues Bovilla, p. 92.

That this is the real explanation receives confirmation from what follows. He says, "I must therefore remind Mr. Moore, and the partisans of Vaccination, that Scrophula was far more prevalent before than after the introduction of inoculation."* No man can remind another of what he never knew. That Scrophula is less prevalent now, than formerly, is a fact that I have learned here for the first time, and I most sincerely wish it could be proved. The first proof given by Mr. Birch must be detailed in his own words: "Who now ever hears of crowds of people flocking from the most distant counties to be cured by the supposed virtue of the royal touch? Who now sees those pieces of gold which, in the reign of James the First, and long after, were suspended so generally as amulets, endued with sovereign power to cure the Evil?"

I am afraid my readers will on this occasion suspect me guilty of a false quotation; but I assure them, on my word of honour, that the above is a fair transcript of the first reason assigned by Mr. Birch for believing that Scrophula has declined. I am forced then to remind him, if it is practicable, that a political event,

* *Serious Reasons, &c.* p. 56.

commonly known by the name of the Revolution, happened in Great Britain in the year 1688. The hereditary king, who possessed the divine right of governing the empire, and the divine power of curing the Evil, was forced to resign the throne: and as neither the Prince of Orange, nor the Sovereigns of the House of Hanover, felt themselves endowed with these supernatural faculties, they have been contented with possessing the crown, and have left to the remnant of the Stuart family, the undisturbed enjoyment of all their medical powers.

His Eminence the Cardinal of York lately exercised this power at Rome; and doubtless with as much success as any of his more illustrious predecessors.

Had Mr. Birch been tolerably acquainted, either with the history of Scrophula, or with the history of England, he would never have imputed the disuse of that ancient royal prerogative to inoculation.

I shall not destroy his second reason for believing that Scrophula has declined, for I hope not to have a reader who cannot do it himself. Besides, it will be time enough to advert to the

cause of the decrease of Scrophula, after the fact is established. And should this most agreeable event ever take place, some paradoxical anti-vaccinist will perhaps impute it to the Small-Pox. For this natural reason that all classical medical writers consider Small-Pox as an occasional exciting cause of Scrophula.

The innocent nature of the Vaccine, and its singular power of preventing the Small-Pox, are the important facts which have been ascertained by Dr. Jenner. But this extraordinary man has even penetrated deeper into the secrets of nature, and appears to have traced the origin of the Vaccine to a complaint incident to the horse's heels. This theory coincides singularly with an observation of Rhases the Arabian, who asserts, that the Small-Pox arises from the camel's hoof!

Mr. Birch, eager to contradict every thing said by Jenner, says, "This theory, which in itself was suspicious, by subsequent experiments was proved erroneous."*

What these experiments are, or whether decisive or otherwise, I cannot pretend to judge,

* Serious Reasons, &c. p. 59.

as I have never read nor heard of them. But as Mr. Birch has in many instances mis-stated the opinions of the works he has named, he can hardly expect that implicit credit should be given to the contents of those he conceals.

Jenner's theory has been confirmed by experiments instituted for the purpose by Dr. Sacco, of Milan; by our countryman Dr. Loy, and others. Dr. Adams, of the Small-Pox Hospital, lately had an opportunity of seeing a strong proof of the correctness of the theory at a farm in Berkeley.

There are many other facts recorded which render the theory highly probable; but its complete establishment must depend upon the labours of future experimental and pathological writers.

Mr. Birch seems to have no intention of entering into this field; indeed he is still far from having acquired a full knowledge of what has been already ascertained.

He who expects to accumulate the requisites for instructing others, must pass "laborious days and sleepless nights."

But if Mr. Birch will take my advice, he will be less ambitious; he cannot employ that portion of time which he devotes to study more usefully, than in an attentive application to the excellent works of the ingenious Jenner. As soon as he is thoroughly master of their contents, he will unquestionably be prompted by humanity to bestow the benefits of Vaccination on some smiling infant, to preserve it from peril: and if he once begins, his success will infallibly lead him to continue the practice. By following this agreeable path, he will escape from the meagre herd of Antivaccinists, and will mix with those respectable and most useful men, who adorn the sciences of Medicine and Surgery.

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